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MAPCO NORTH POLE REFINERY

On March 5, 1987 the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was asked by EPA's Alaska Operations Office to conduct a RCRA inspection at the MAPCO North Pole Refinery. Though an inspection had been planned, the visit was stepped up based on allegations that the refinery was injecting hazardous substances into the trans-Alaska Pipeline.

The facility has experienced many spills of various petroleum products since operations began in 1977 (DEC estimates more than 150,000 gallons). Groundwater contamination was detected beneath the refinery in 1982. An aggressive Compliance Order by Consent was issued by DEC in December 1986 that directed MAPCO to continue oil spill cleanup efforts. Since those efforts began in 1985, more than 80,000 gallons of petroleum has been recovered.

On April 5, 1987, an employee of the Refinery filed with the Labor Department for protection under federal environmental statutes. After surfacing concerns regarding health and safety to company management, she stated she was put on probation, received threatening phone calls, and was followed constantly.

Based on the March inspection, EPA sent MAPCO a letter on May 15¹⁹⁸⁷ advising the company that they were in violation of several sections of RCRA. The letter also elicited a great deal of additional information regarding MAPCO's operations and waste management practices.

Senator Metzenbaum has requested a GAO investigation to look into the allegations including ADEC's relationship with MAPCO officials. Governor Cowper has called Metzenbaum's allegations about lax state enforcement "misinformed and irresponsible."

Though it appears MAPCO may have disposed of some wastes into the Pipeline, it would have been so diluted in the daily crude (1.9 million barrels), that it would have been undetectable. Region 10 plans to continue it's RCRA enforcement actions with a 3008/3013 Order.

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